



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA and Shell Oil Company Launch Enhanced Ocean Observations Project in Gulf of Mexico

NOAA and the Shell Oil Company have signed a cooperative agreement to place meteorological and oceanographic observation sensors on seven Shell oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. Once installed, the suite of observation equipment will become a vital component of the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), providing valuable data for use in hurricane research, forecasting, and coastal resource management.

"IOOS is all about unlocking the secrets of our oceans and coastal waters. Thanks to Shell's commitment we'll be able to gather additional data that may help us understand how tropical cyclones develop in the Gulf region, learn more about coastal flooding, harmful algal blooms and the processes behind dead zones, becoming better stewards of our valuable coastal resources," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

Deepwater oil and gas platform operators in the northern Gulf of Mexico are required under federal regulations to collect and transmit current profile observations to NOAA's National Data Buoy Center. However, this agreement will surpass those requirements and calls for the following enhancements:

- Upgrade all weather stations on four Shell platforms to include direct transmission to NOAA's geostationary satellites (GOES), and emergency power ensuring an uninterrupted stream of information even if the platform is evacuated.
- Upgrade ocean wave and current instrumentation on Shell's "Auger" platform to include GOES transmission and emergency power supply in order to supply oceanographic information to NOAA continuously.
- Ocean heat measurements will be collected from the Shell "Brutus" platform to better quantify the role of upper level thermoclines in hurricane intensity.
- Collect and share meteorological information from two new continental shelf locations off Louisiana that are currently not monitored.
- Installation of high frequency radar transmitters on a Shell platform off the Texas coast. This system will be able to calculate the speed and direction of the surface current – vital information for weather forecasting and dispersion modeling.

"Shell is proud to be part of this collaboration which leverages complementary strengths - NOAA's scientific expertise with significant Shell offshore experience and infrastructure," said John Hofmeister, president, Shell Oil Company. "The Gulf of Mexico is a critical resource and plays a vital role in delivering a secure energy supply to the U.S. Shell believes this information will benefit everyone living along the Gulf Coast and its customers across the country. For Shell, this information could help to protect our people and assets."

Installation of the equipment will start in spring 2008 with completion of all projects anticipated in late 2009. Shell Oil will acquire and install the devices while NOAA will provide quality control of the data and make it available in real-time to National Weather Service forecast offices, NOAA's National Hurricane Center and the public. NOAA will also provide technical expertise in high frequency radar. Data from these projects will also be made available for input to environmental prediction models.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

NOAA IOOS program: <http://ioos.noaa.gov/>

Shell Oil Company media: <http://www.shell.com/us/media>